In addition to these FAQs, we strongly encourage you to visit the Fiber Science and Apparel Design website, www.human.cornell.edu/fsad/index.cfm, for more information about the program and its opportunities.

Q: What is the average number of pieces submitted in a portfolio?
A: There are no expectations around the quantity; it can be as few as five or six, but not more than 20 items. Applicants should submit her/his best pieces.

Q: Is it possible to submit an electronic version of my portfolio instead of a paper-based portfolio?
A: No, all Fashion Design applicants MUST submit a paper-based portfolio.

Q: Is a portfolio necessary to be competitive in the undergraduate admission process for FD&M?
A: Yes. The best applicants are proud of their accomplishments in art, design, and fashion, and are highly motivated to share their work with department faculty members.

Q: I have worked in summer stock theatres or as an intern for a local fashion designer, etc. and would like the designer to write a letter of recommendation on my behalf. May I use a letter from a professional designer in place of one of my high school teachers in my formal application to Cornell?
A: No. You are required to select two of high school teachers to write letters about your academics, special talents, and personal characteristics. A recommendation letter from a designer about good work in the theatre or during an internship can be included in your portfolio.

Q: I have a background in art and photography, but have not yet experimented with fashion sketching and sewing projects. Will this hurt my chances of getting accepted to the FD&M program?
A: No. FD&M faculty in Fashion Design and admissions officers understand that a majority of U.S. high schools rarely teach sewing and fashion sketching in the curriculum. Fashion graphics and sewing are taught in the first two semesters at Cornell and are required of all Fashion Design students. Not having these items in your admission portfolio will not compromise your application. You should include the art and design work of which you are most proud.

Q: I do not have a sewing background. Should I enroll in a sewing course in a local fabric store, or ask a family member or friend to work with me on some basic sewing projects before I begin my college courses, if I am accepted to the Fashion Design program?
A: The summer before you matriculate at Cornell is an excellent time to do independent work in sewing to establish a basic understanding of fabric and machine handling. Background work will enhance the quality of projects in your fashion design studios. Fashion design work in FD&M begins with original sketch ideas, patterns are then developed, and all garments are constructed by students in fashion fabric.

Q: The portfolio guidelines suggest that students show a range of work in “Primary” and “Secondary” categories. Is it better to show one item from each category or show a group of items from fewer categories?
A: Applicants should submit the visual work that best highlights their creativity and skill level in art, design, and fashion.

Q: I have no background in painting and water colors, but can sketch creative fashion illustrations. Should my portfolio sketches be colored to indicate fabrics used or can they be shown in black and white?
A: Black and white sketches work well for fashion illustrations. You might, however, want to include fabric swatches with some of your sketch work to give reviewers an idea of how you envision the finished garment(s). Design faculty are interested in applicants’ thoughts about the design process, fabric selections, and color choices.

Q: I have sewn several designs from printed commercial patterns. What is the best way to capture this work?
A: Photograph full front, full back, and side views of the designs on a model or mannequin. Take several close-up shots of the detail work and construction work that you wish to highlight. Include fabric swatches of the designs with your photos. Note the source of the design, i.e. commercial pattern, several commercial patterns used together, original designs that were created by draping, or by self-made patterns.
Q: I have a strong point of view in fashion and am asked by others to consult on their fashion choices, purchases, and decisions. How can I reflect that effort in my portfolio?
A: Create and include storyboards or collages around fashion themes and colors to demonstrate how you coordinate apparel and accessories. You can also include photos of your friends in the outfits you have coordinated for them and briefly explain your selection decisions.

Q: I applied for the Early Decision Program (EDP) in Fashion Design, and was deferred to the spring application pool. I have added new visuals to my portfolio since submitting my application. May I send these items to be included with my application packet for spring review?
A: Yes. You may send updates about your design activities, new awards, academic and personal achievements, and portfolio pieces to be added to your application. Additional letters of recommendation are not helpful.

NOTE: Please contact these Fashion Design faculty members if with other specific questions about preparing your portfolio – Professor Anita Racine (arr5@cornell.edu | 607-255-1931) or Professor Van Dyk Lewis (vdl4@cornell.edu | 607-255-1930)